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Message Text

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R 121754Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
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INFO AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
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AMCONSUL NICE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 22129

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: THE UDF CONVENTION -- AN AFFIRMATION

SUMMARY. WHATEVER THE CONTINUING MANIFESTATIONS OF TRADITIONAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE PERSONALITIES AND PROGRAMS OF THE MEMBER PARTIES, THE UDF'S FIRST CONVENTION HELD IN PARIS JULY 8 CLEARLY CONFIRMED THE REALITY OF THE UDF AS A POLITICAL FORCE. PLANNED FOR AN ATTENDANCE OF TWELVE TO FIFTEEN HUNDRED, THE HALL OVERFLOWED WITH THE ALMOST TWO THOUSAND WHO CAME. THE LIST OF SPEAKERS INCLUDED FOUR MINISTERS, TWO SECRETARIES OF STATE AS WELL AS THE LEADERS OF THE COMPONENT POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS (PR, CDS, RADICALS, MDSF, CLUBS PERSPECTIVES AND REALITIES). TO THE NATIONAL AND DEPARTMENTAL DELEGATES, UNITED FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE CONVENTION OFFERED THE LEADERSHIP'S STATEMENT OF THE UDF'S IDENTITY, POLICY, PHILOSOPHY AND PLANS. MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT WHILE EXPLAINING THE NECESSITY OF BARRE'S POLICIES, PROVIDED THE FIRST INDICATIONS OF THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
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REFORMS TO BE BROUGHT OUT IN THE FALL. LEADERS OF THE CONSTITUENT POLITICAL PARTIES UNDERLINED THEIR INTENT TO WORK WITH THEIR PARTNERS WITHIN THE UDF ORGANIZATION WHILE MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF THEIR INDIVIDUAL PARTY IDENTITIES. UDF SPOKESMEN LECANUET AND PINTON PROVIDED THE FIRST CLEAR STATEMENT OF THE UDF'S PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICAL STRATEGY. AS A POLITICAL HAPPENING DESI-

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GNED TO AFFIRM THE REALITY OF THE UDF, THE CONVENTION WAS A SUCCESS. END SUMMARY.

1. AN ACT OF AFFIRMATION: THE CONVENTION WAS CLEARLY DESIGNED TO IMPRESS THE NEW DELEGATES FROM 82 DEPARTMENTS OF FRANCE WITH THE REALITY OF THE UDF. THE SEVENTEEN SPEECHES DURING THE SINGLE DAY MEETING LEFT LITTLE TIME FOR "DEBATE" BY DELEGATES ALTHOUGH THE RITUAL FORMAT WAS FOLLOWED OF ASKING FOR COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR. RATHER, THE LEADERSHIP USED THE OPPORTUNITY TO AFFIRM THAT:

-- IN SPITE OF LOCAL PROBLEMS RESULTING FROM TRADITIONAL RIVALRIES BETWEEN THE COMPONENT PARTIES, THE UDF AS A NATIONAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATION EXISTS AND THE INDIVIDUAL PARTY LEADERS ARE COMMITTED TO MAKING IT WORK;

-- AS OPPOSED TO TRADITIONAL MONOLITHIC PARTY STRUCTURES, THE UDF IS A FEDERATED PLURALISTIC ORGANIZATION IN WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL PARTY IDENTITIES WILL BE MAINTAINED AS A MEANS OF APPEALING TO A BROAD SPECTRUM OF THE FRENCH ELECTORATE;

-- THE KEY QUESTION OF EVENTUAL "FUSION" WILL BE LEFT FOR TIME AND FUTURE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS TO RESOLVE;

-- THE UDF INTENDS TO PLAY AN INCREASING ROLE IN

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THE DETERMINATION OF GOF POLICY. INPUTS FROM THE INDIVIDUAL PARTIES AND THEIR STUDY GROUPS WILL BE COMBINED AND PRESENTED THROUGH THE UDF TO THE GOF AS A BASIS FOR POLICY MAKING;

-- THE UDF IS GISCARD'S POLITICAL MACHINE, IS IN POWER (WITNESS THE MINISTERS AND SECRETARIES OF STATE) AND INTENDS TO BECOME FRANCE'S DOMINANT POLITICAL PARTY DURING THE NEXT TEN YEARS (INCLUDING A SECOND TERM FOR GISCARD);

-- THE UDF IS INTENDED TO FORM THE BASIS OF A "GISCARDIAN MOVEMENT" ENCOMPASSING THAT RELATIVELY HOMOGENOUS CENTRAL CORE OF THE FRENCH ELECTORATE DEFINED IN GISCARD'S BOOK DEMOCRATIE FRANCAISE. AS UDF DELEGATE GENERAL PINTON PUT IT, THE UDF IS A POLITICAL EXPRESSION OF A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.

2. EXPLAINING BARRE: IN ADDITION TO THE DISCUSSION OF THE UDF AS A POLITICAL MOVEMENT, MINISTERS BARROT AND MONORY ALONG WITH SECRETARY OF STATE PROUTEAU SPENT CONSIDERABLE EFFORT IN EXPLAINING BARRE'S ECONOMIC POLICIES, WHAT THEY WERE, WHY THEY WERE NECESSARY AND WHAT

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THEY INTENDED TO ACCOMPLISH. WHILE QUESTIONS AND DEBATE

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FROM THE FLOOR WERE LIMITED, THE DELEGATES EXPRESSED
A DEFINITE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF BARRE'S POLICIES
AND HOW THEY COULD BE DEFENDED. (THIS SAME PROBLEM AROSE
AT ANOTHER RECENT MEETING OF UDF CADRES WHERE STRONG RE-
SERVATIONS TO BARRE'S POLICIES WERE ALSO EXPRESSED).
OTHER LEADERS SUCH AS FOURCADE (PRESIDENT OF THE CLUBS
PERSPECTIVES AND REALITIES, AND EX-MINISTER OF FINANCE)
NOTED THAT THERE WAS STILL MUCH THAT THE GOF COULD DO
TO ALLEVIATE THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND THAT THE UDF
WOULD MAKE PROPOSALS TO THIS EFFECT. PARTICULARLY CITED
WERE FISCAL REFORMS, IMPROVED TERRITORIAL MANAGEMENT
AND PLANNING, TAX RELIEF, IMPROVING CONDITIONS FOR SMALL
AND MEDIUM INDUSTRIES, ETC.

3. A CALL FOR UNITY ON THE RIGHT...: UDF PRESIDENT LE-
CANUET CLEARLY MARKED OUT THE UDF'S CLAIM TO THE CENTER
OF THE FRENCH POLITICAL SPECTRUM. LECANUET DESCRIBED THE
RPR AS THE PARTY REFLECTING A NATIONALIST, AUTHORITARIAN
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CURRENT IN FRENCH POLITICS, ASSOCIATED WITH BUT DIMINISHED FROM THE HISTORICAL PHENOMENA OF DE GAULLE AND GAULLISM. REFERRING TO THE RECENT RPR DISAGREEMENTS WITH GISCARD'S POLICIES AND PROPOSALS, LECANUET NOTED THAT IT WAS THE MAJORITY ELECTORATE'S VOTING UNITY AND DISCIPLINE WHICH WON THE ELECTIONS. THAT ELECTORATE NOW EXPECTED THEIR ELECTED LEADERS TO MAINTAIN UNITY AND DISCIPLINE IN MEETING THE PROBLEMS OF FRANCE. THE RPR, HE SAID, SHOULD WORK WITH THE UDF AND THE PRESIDENT IN FINDING SOLUTIONS INSTEAD OF FOLLOWING A POLICY WHICH DEGRADES INTER-MAJORITY RELATIONS. THE FIFTH REPUBLIC, HE NOTED, WAS NOT COMPATIBLE WITH A REGIME OF PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES.

4....AND AN OPENING TO THE LEFT: IN OUTLINING THE UDF'S POLICY TOWARD THE OPPOSITION, LECANUET NOTED THE LEFT'S DEFEAT IN MARCH AND WONDERED HOW LONG THE SOCIALISTS WOULD CHOOSE TO REMAIN IN THEIR SELF-IMPOSED EXILE FROM POWER IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COMMUNISTS. THE UDF, HE NOTED, WAS READY TO WORK WITH THE SOCIALISTS IN THOSE AREAS WHERE THERE WAS A CONVERGENCE OF VIEWS. IT WAS ONLY A QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE SOCIALISTS WOULD CHOOSE TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE GOF IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PART OF THEIR PROGRAM. MINISTER SOISSON (EX-PR SECRETARY GENERAL) BUT IT DIFFERENTLY. HE NOTED THAT THE HEART OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE FUTURE WOULD BE IN THE CENTER, NOT ON THE EXTREMES. THE MAIN POLITICAL DEBATE WOULD BE BETWEEN THE UDF AND THE SOCIALISTS. THEY, HE SAID, ARE OUR ONLY REAL RIVALS.

5. THE NEW GISCARDIAN APPROACH...: IF IT IS SUCCESSFUL, THE UDF WILL MARK A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN FRANCE'S
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POLITICAL LIFE. ANDRE MALRAUX, DE GAULLE'S MINISTER OF CULTURE, STATED THE GAULLIST ANALYSIS SUCCINCTLY WHEN HE SAID: "BETWEEN THE COMMUNISTS AND US, THERE IS NOTHING." GISCARD'S ANALYSIS IS JUST THE OPPOSITE. FOR HIM, THERE IS A RELATIVELY (AND INCREASINGLY) HOMOGENOUS CENTER MAJORITY WITHIN THE FRENCH ELECTORATE WHICH WILL BE DIVIDED BETWEEN THE UDF AND THE SOCIALISTS. THIS SORT OF ANALYSIS ALLOWS FOR POLITICAL RIVALRY WITHIN MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE LIMITS AND POTENTIALLY ALTERNANCE IN POWER AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE. COALITIONS WITH THE GAULLISTS ON ONE SIDE AND THE COMMUNISTS ON THE OTHER

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MAY BE NECESSARY FOR ELECTORAL REASONS, BUT THE POWER
WILL REMAIN IN THE CENTER. SECOND, THE UDF AS OPPOSED
TO THE TRADITIONALLY MONOLITHIC FRENCH POLITICAL PARTY
IS DESIGNED TO BE PLURALISTIC IN ORDER TO INCORPORATE
AS MUCH OF THE CENTER AS POSSIBLE -- I.E., FORM THE
BASIS OF A GISCARDIAN "MOVEMENT" REJECTING THE EXTREMES
AND REFLECTING A MORE PRAGMATIC, TECHNOCRATIC APPROACH.
INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL PARTIES WILL REFLECT INDIVIDUAL
TENDENCIES, BUT WITHIN THE OVERALL UDF UMBRELLA. THE
UDF WILL NOT BE A PARTY OF IDEOLOGY. MEMBERSHIP DIREC-
TLY IN THE UDF WILL BE OFFERED TO THOSE WHO WISH TO
SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT WITHOUT JOINING ANY OF THE TRADI-
TIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES.

6....WILL IT WORK?: WHILE THE CONGRESS WAS DESIGNED
TO SENSITIZE THE NEW DELEGATES TO THE REALITY OF THE
UDF, WHAT IT IS AND WHERE IT IS GOING, SOME PRO-
BLEMS REMAIN. THE EFFORT TO MAINTAIN AN OPEN PLURALIS-
TIC STRUCTURE WITHIN THE UDF WILL INSURE INTERNAL FRIC-
TIONS ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE HISTORICAL AND LOCAL RIVAL-
RIES BETWEEN THE COMPONENT PARTIES. SECONDLY, EVEN IF
GISCARD'S THESIS OF A HOMOGENOUS CENTER MAJORITY IS

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CORRECT, IT STILL REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF A POLITICAL
ORGANIZATION AS LACKING IN PHILOSOPHICAL CONTENT AS

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THE UDF CAN APPEAL TO THE HIGHLY POLITICIZED FRENCH ELECTORATE. THIRD, WHILE THE UDF NOW CLEARLY EXISTS, IT IS STILL ORGANIZATIONALLY BY FAR THE WEAKEST OF THE FOUR MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES. IT WILL TAKE A LOT OF TIME AND WORK TO TURN IT INTO A POLITICAL PARTY EQUAL TO THE GAULLISTS OR SOCIALISTS. FOURTH, THE ABILITY OF GISCARD AND THE UDF TO BRING ABOUT THE REFORMS ON WHICH THEY BASE THEIR APPEAL IS LIMITED BY THEIR DEPENDENCE ONTHE RPR AS THE OTHER COMPONENT OF THE MAJORITY. WHILE THE UDF MAY TALK ABOUT OPENING TO THE LEFT, SO LONG AS THE SOCIALISTS REMAIN FIRMLY COMMITTED TO THEIR ALLIANCE (OF WHATEVER TYPE) WITH THE COMMUNISTS, COOPERATION WILL BE THE EXCEPTION RATHER THAN THE RULE. THUS THE UDF AND THE RPR WILL CONTINUE TO NEED EACH OTHER AND THEIR RESPECTIVE FREEDOM OF ACTION LIMITED.

7. THE UDF IS OFF TO A GOOD START, BUT ITS FUTURE
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WILL DEPEND ON THE SUCCESS OF GISCARD AND GOF IN COMBATTING THE PROBLEMS, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL, NOW FACING FRANCE. EVEN WITHIN THE UDF, THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL CRITICISM OF BARRE'S RIGOROUS ECONOMICS AND LACK OF MOVEMENT TOWARD THE SOCIAL REFORMS PROMISED BY GISCARD. BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE SUCCESS OF THE UDF AS A POLITICAL PARTY WILL DEPEND ON THE WILLINGNESS OF THE CADRES OF THE INDIVIDUAL COMPONENT PARTIES TO GET OUT AND WORK FOR IT. AND THAT REMAINS A BIG QUESTION MARK.
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